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Find ex-Green Beret guilty of lesser rap in attack on Libyan

Fort Collins, Colo. (AP)—Eugene Tafoya, a decorated Green Beret veteran who was accused of trying to assassinate a Libyan dissident on orders of Libyan strongman Moammar Khadafy, was convicted yesterday of third-degree assault and conspiracy.

He could get up to two years in jail. Tafoya has been in jail more than seven months in lieu of \$500,000 bond and that time could be deducted. Had he been convicted of attempted first-degree murder, he could have been sentenced to up to 12 years.

The nine-woman, three-man Larimer District Court jury deliberated more than 17 hours over three days before deciding on the least severe of the guilty options available to it.

Tafoya, 46, had been charged with attempted first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the Oct. 14, 1980 shooting of Faisal Zagallai, a Colorado State University student.

Tafoya admitted shooting Zagallai twice in the head with a .22-caliber revolver, but said he acted in self-defense after Zagallai pulled a gun on him. Zagallai lost the sight of one eye, but survived. Tafoya said he had gone to Zagallai's apartment on behalf of the CIA to warn him against making radio broadcasts.

The CIA denied that Tafoya was working on its behalf, but defense attorneys portrayed him as a patriot deserted by his country.

Outside the courtroom with his wife, Farida, Zagallai, 35, told reporters he thought it was a "shocking" verdict that would increase terrorism in the United States.

"I think there is a hidden hand behind this whole God-damned trial," said Zagallai, who has campaigned against the policies of Khadafy. "The decision was prejudiced. The defense didn't have one single evidence to support his theory."

Zagallai did not elaborate on what he meant by "hidden hand."